

**YWCA Regina  
City of Regina  
Council Meeting  
28 January 2019**

Hello, my name is Melissa Coomber-Bendtsen and I have the privilege of being the CEO of YWCA Regina.

I would like to start by thanking Council for providing me with the opportunity to speak about our project today, as well as the City Administration team for their support and assistance over the past year, in preparation of the report that is before you. I would also like to acknowledge the delegation that has joined me, comprised of community partners, staff, and board members, and thank them for taking the time to speak about our partnerships and the impact that this project will have on our community as a whole.

YWCA Regina has been meeting the diverse and evolving needs of our community for over 100 years. As Regina's oldest and largest women's multi-serving organization, we offer our City's only homeless shelter and are one of three domestic violence shelters that provide services for women and children.

Gender-based violence is a pervasive and ongoing problem in Regina. It affects many aspects of a women's life, including her physical and mental health, well-being, and economic security. Saskatchewan has the highest rate of intimate partner violence in Canada at twice the national average and, in Regina, reported sexual assault rates have increased significantly over the last two years. Additionally, the 2018 Homelessness Point in Time Count showed that, of the individuals surveyed, 51% were women and 9% were children under the age of 18. The YWCA has felt and continues to feel the effects of these statistics – In 2017, we turned away over 2000 women and children from My Aunt's Place, our homeless shelter, and close to 1000 women and children from our domestic violence shelter due to lack of space. In addition, our affordable housing program, Kikinaw Residence, turned away 238 women last year.

It is apparent that we need to advocate for additional shelter beds and crisis response services or change the way that we approach our work. Best practice and our experience indicate that women and children are better served outside of the shelter system and in a preventative way rather than in response to crisis. Our research also shows that the major issues facing victimized women in Regina are inaccessibility of existing services and resources, and social isolation.

The concept of a "hub" model that serves women and families before, during, and after crisis locates vital services under one roof by delivering wraparound, centralized

programs. We know that working with folks before crisis significantly reduces institutional responses like hospital visits and police calls.

This hub model concept, The Centre for Women and Families, is rooted in a harm reduction philosophy that is trauma informed. The Centre will provide opportunities for the broader community to engage in healthy activities that prevent the isolation of poverty and vulnerability.

YWCA Regina sees a critical need, not only for additional space to make The Centre for Women and Families a reality, but for appropriate facilities to support the programs that address the barriers that keep vulnerable families in homelessness and violent situations. The size and configuration of our current facility no longer serves our organization adequately and has not been able to evolve with our program offerings. Our building simply does not support the concept of The Centre for Women and Families.

The Centre for Women and Families has a completed needs assessment, best practice report, site options analysis, and pre-design report, and the YWCA has done extensive partnership and stakeholder development. The Class D cost estimate for the Centre for Women and Families is approximately \$35 million dollars.

The City Administration report presented outlines several options for land acquisition to develop The Centre for Women and Families, and the YWCA is requesting that council consider the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee to gift 1915 and 1955 Retallack Street to the YWCA.

YWCA Regina believes that it is important for the City of Regina to present a contribution to this project for the following reasons:

- The site will ensure that the YWCA remains in the area as we are currently the only 24-hour service provider in downtown Regina.
- It will assist in leveraging monetary contributions of \$10 million from the Province of Saskatchewan, as well as \$12 million from the Government of Canada.
- This project will ensure that the YWCA is sustainable and can continue to serve our community's most vulnerable for another 100 years.

The Centre for Women and Families will decrease the use of emergency services, strengthen long-term health determinants, reduce the number of non-emergency calls to police, decrease turn-a-ways from the shelter system, reduce the number of women and families in crisis, and ultimately decrease the rate of intimate partner violence and sexual assault in our province and in our City.

In the spirit of reconciliation, Regina will have its first adequate healing and ceremonial space at The Centre. This sacred space will belong to the community and will ensure

that Urban Indigenous peoples have access to their traditional cultures and teachings. The Centre will also provide the only indoor healing lodge in the City.

The YWCA— in partnership with Mobile Crisis, Regina Sexual Assault Centre, REACH, All Nations Hope, and Carmichael Outreach— is committed to ensuring that The Centre for Women and Families is a vibrant community hub, guided by the community’s vision of a “safe, welcoming, and empowering home place for women, children, and those who love them. Building on our strengths, together.”

**Ahkameyimok – All of You Persevere.**

Thank you again for the opportunity to present to you today.